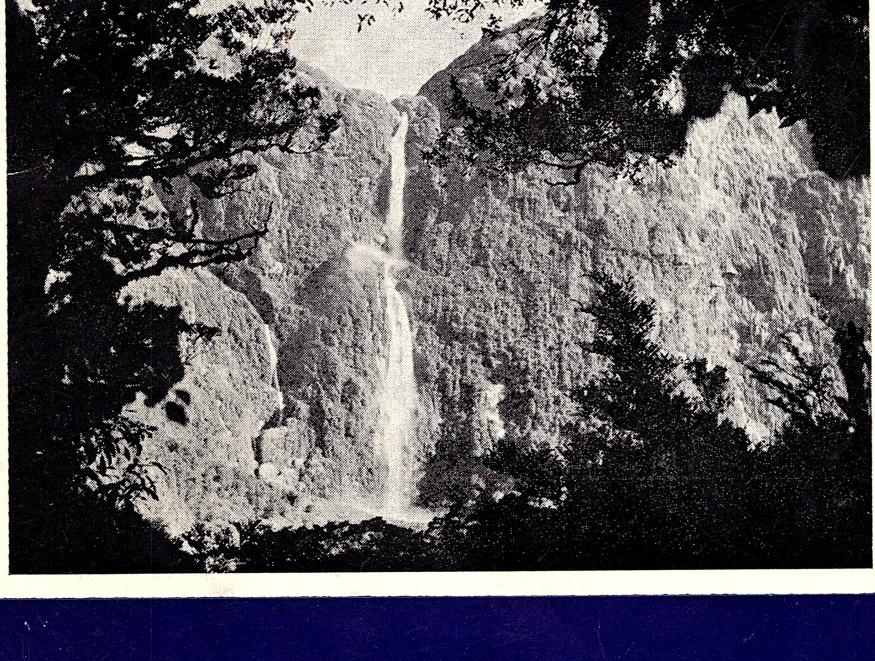
Milford Track Annual 1972



William Anderson

Milford Track Annual

Supplement to Milford Trails

November 1972.

Wm. Anderson

Front Cover— Sutherland Falls from Dorothy's View on the Anderson Track.

Photo: Dorothy Anderson

Donald Sutherland with Mrs Sutherland, maid and guide.

Photo: by Courtesy Alexander Turnbull Library

INTRODUCTION

In bringing to life this, the first volume of Milford Track Annual we seek to satisfy an oft expressed wish for a brief, convenient to carry handbook, calculated to supplement the very good service normally afforded track patrons. We also, by this means, endeavour to continue where Milford Trails left off and bring the intervening track history up-to-date. Thereafter each volume will supplement that history.

Recorded experiences of track-walkers have provided some of the richest history, so we invite from the same source first-hand accounts and for historic material they may have acquired from earlier times. Our scrap-books although steadily filling, will always have a blank page for such welcome material.

Any suggestions calculated to make the Annual of greater use and interest will be welcomed.

We extend to all hikers our good wishes and trust that their anticipation of high adventure in 72-73 will be fully realised.

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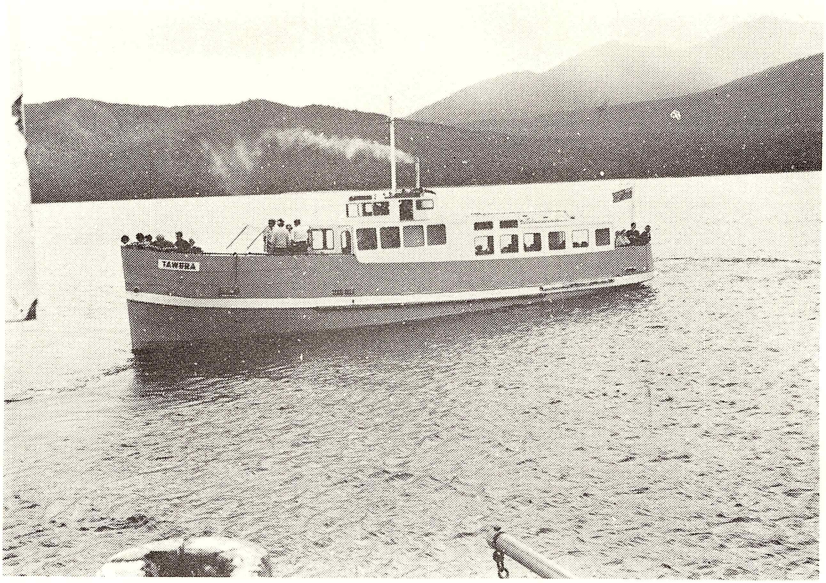


M. V. Tawera

Photo Dorothy Anderson

Overlooking the Arthur Valley from the MacKinnon Pass, Green Valley in the Distance.

Photo Zygmunt Kepka

FIRST STEPS

The majority of trampers setting out to walk the Milford Track have little inkling what to expect beyond the supposition that its scenery must be pretty good to warrant the audacious declaration that this is the "Finest Walk in the World".

The bare bones of the contemplated performance can be gleaned from the very attractive and informative brochure available at tourist agencies. In it will be found all the tramper requires to start him off on his way. It is unnecessary for us to repeat that information. It is also unnecessary to make comment on features encountered on the first leg of the journey up Lake Te Anau. The launch master will deliver a most instructive and entertaining commentary on matters pertaining to the lake. At Glade House you will find in Phil and Betty Turnbull a mine of information. However, you can't take them or the launch master with you on the track. Neither can you monopolise the guide when the party is strung out over miles of the track. It is also true that our brief observations can anticipate and satisfy only a fraction of your requirements. It still depends on the alertness of the individual tramper himself to seek information from whatever source he can tap.

PACKS UP

When approaching the wharf at the head of the lake the attention of voyagers may be drawn to the original landing place on the small sandy delta to the left at the mouth of the Clinton River. Arriving by sail and oar or by the little steamers, Ripple and Te Uria, passengers were disgorged there to find their way to Government Hut located on a high ledge above the river. The track then took a fairly direct course behind a low swampy area to reach the river again some two miles distant. This was before 1895 in which year J.F. Garvey built the original Glade House. With additions and alterations it served till 1928 when it was destroyed by fire. The present Glade House stands near the site of the old.

The wharf erected to serve this new Glade House was opened with appropriate ceremony, Miss Gertrude Garvey having been given the

honour of cutting the ribbon. This same lady inspired the name for the Gertrude Saddle.

Making their way from the wharf to the lodge, trampers will be struck by the prominent mountain rearing its head above the intervening bush up the valley. Freedom Walkers, as those booked with the Park Board are popularly known, may take special interest in it for it stands at the junction of the two branches of the Clinton where Clinton Forks Hut, four miles distant awaits them. This mountain was first known as Sentinel Bluff, then Mt McKenzie and now back to the original name.

In setting out from Glade House, a few minutes' walk takes the tramper over the suspension bridge, immediately to be swallowed up in the deep beech forest. Clinton was the name given the river by James McKerrow (later Surveyor General) when he made the first survey of Lake Te Anau in 1862.

At 1½ miles from Glade, Quintin MacKinnon, in 1889 erected the first substantial hut in the valley. This was at the navigable limit for his whaleboat. Phil Turnbull has cleared the site and erected a sign.

Further on where a clear view is obtained up the East Branch of the Clinton a sign points to the Wick Mountains at its head. This view is of interest to the tramper for his feet will lead him to pass on its far side on his last day on the track.

A clearing to the left of the track at three miles marks the site of "Three Mile Hut" burned down in 1950 with its occupant Ike McCann.

Keep a lookout for robins. After a complete absence for many years, they have returned, presumably from the Eglinton Valley which is their stronghold. As if by a planned exchange, wekas have gone over into the Eglinton and have visited Knobbs' Flat and Cascade Creek.

Six Mile Hut, where the mid-day snack meets ready acceptance, was known in earlier times as Mid Hut because it was situated halfway between the Government Hut and Mintaro, which was the regular stopping place prior to 1906.

When the more open valley floor is reached after 8 miles, a loop track leaves the main one to pass by Hidden Lake. The name is appropriate for, although so near it could not be seen from the formed track. The wide open stretch about a mile from Pompolona makes a striking change of view. Known as The Prairie, eyes have been cast on its suitability for an air strip to serve Pompolona.

Pompolona or Pompalona as it was generally spelt at an earlier time, derives its name from Quintin MacKinnon's specialty, a tasty pancake or scone. Some have suggested the name is of Italian origin but it is generally assumed that like the delicacy itself, it is one of Quintin's own invention.

After a generous intake of the modern Pompolonas and a good night's sleep, spirits are high in anticipation of the great day that awaits them. It may dawn with glorious blue skies, against which background the mountain horizon is chiselled in sharp relief. It may commence with a dense fog, limiting visibility to a small circle. It may present an ominous threat, with clouds building up and creeping over the Pass, or already the rain may be drumming on the roof. Hope takes a lot of dashing. The fog may lift, the rain may clear, so off they go committed to whatever the day prescribes.

About a mile on the way the St Quintin Falls may be seen coming down the mountain side on the far side of the canyon across the river. There are no doubts here about the origin of that name.

Mintaro, on the other hand is a name that remains a puzzle. Here we have the old Mintaro Hut, Mintaro Lake and Park Board Hut. There is only one other Mintaro we know, a township in South Australia but there is no direct connection we can find, that would account for a copying of that name.

On the Pass between the Cairn and the hump a half mile further on, glimpses of Quintin are obtained here and there away down in the Arthur Valley. It may be no more than two miles as the crow flies but by the track, more than twice the distance must be covered. The highest point on the track, 3,600 feet marks the limits of jurisdiction by Te Anau and Milford respectively.

Views of Quintin and the Arthur valley are now left behind and the Clinton Canyon comes into sight with Pompolona appearing as a mere speck in a patch of bush in the distance. By leaving the track a few yards a good view of Lake Mintaro and the Park Board Hut may be obtained. The Pass Hut is overtaken in a few minutes after coming into view. It is jointly owned by the Tourist Hotel Corporation and the Park Board. Freedom Walkers enter from the near side as it is approached, others the far side.

This is the third hut built on this site and the fourth on the Pass. Terrific hurricanes which at times sweep over the pass have spelt their doom. Even down in the sheltered valley an occasional freak blast will strike, as struck Crows' Nest and pushed the hut off its foundations.

After crossing Moraine Creek, where the track turns to head down the valley, a portion of the top leap of the Sutherland Falls comes into view. It disappears by the intervention of the low spur of Mt Hart a little way beyond Crows' Nest. A stroll out on to the airstrip from Quintin will afford the next glimpse obtainable.

One question frequently asked is whether the seven day package has any worth while advantage over the six day. The answer to that one is an unqualified yes. On the six day package the tramper, to visit the Sutherland Falls, must do so on the day he arrives at Quintin, whether or not he feels fit for the extra 2½ miles there and back. Late in the day with the sunshine gone from its face, the great waterfall has lost much of its sparkle and beauty. On the other hand the extra day spent at Quintin allows for a more leisurely traverse of the MacKinnon Pass, for the falls may be left to the following day, with the prospect of a marvellous view in the morning, heightened by a magnificent rainbow. After two days' tramping many find an easy day a real godsend. The active ones need not be bored. They can put in a full and profitable day.

There are times when a flight can be made from the Quintin airstrip and this is eagerly seized upon. The map of Quintin Environs will indicate some of the places of interest that may be visited. One of the interesting features, the Giant's Castle has, for three seasons been cut off from the River Track by a change in the river

Park Board Hut
Photo Zygmunt Kępka

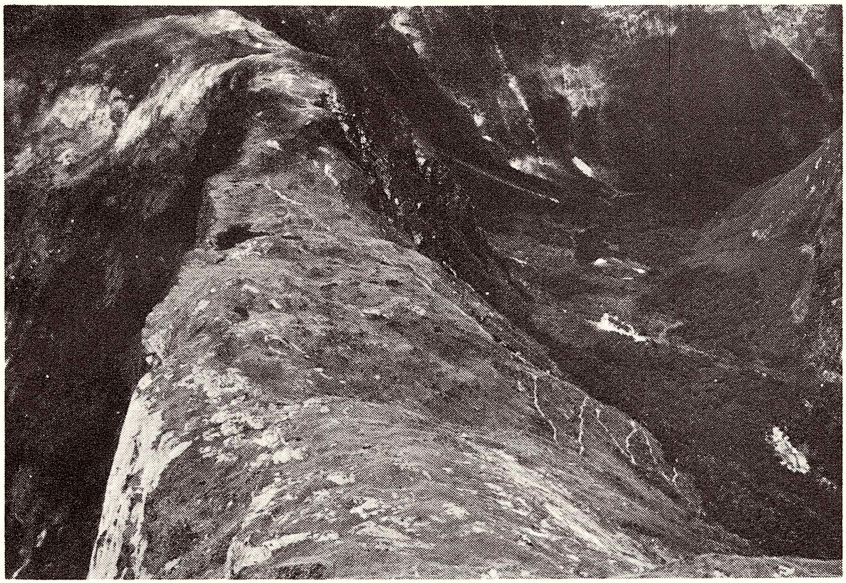
Tarns on MacKinnon Pass Shoulder of Mt Elliot at right of picture.
Photo Zygmunt Kępka

bed, sending the main stream between the castle and the track.

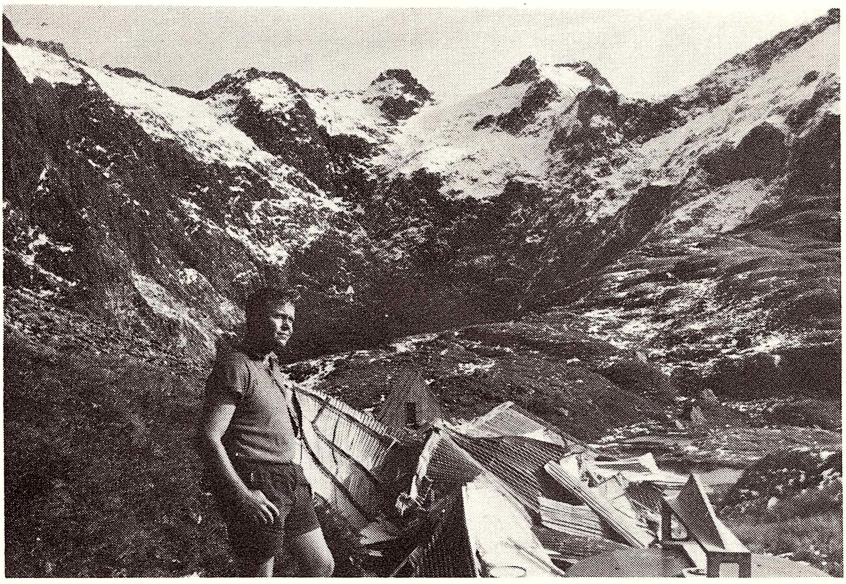
Just beyond two miles from Quintin on the last day's tramp the Park Board's Dumpling Hut is seen nearby the track. It derives the name from Dumpling Hill. Looking straight down the air strip from Quintin this rounded, tree covered hill, stands out very prominently to mark its location.

Two very worth while features may be seen a mile or so beyond the Boatshed. They are the Mackay Falls and Bell Rock. The falls themselves are spectacular while the Bell Rock, because of its novelty never fails to impress old and young. A short distance after crossing Mackay Creek via the Tree Bridge, the old original track is intercepted. A sign to the right points to Milford, the one to the left to Mackay Falls. Here you may dump your pack while you pay the visit, but remember to take a torch or matches with you. The Bell Rock had at one time been lodged in the creek bed while the action of water and gravel over many centuries had worn in it a large cavity. Some cause we can only guess at, then dislodged it, causing it to tumble down the hill and come to rest the other way up on the bank of the creek. Only recently the manner of its discovery came to our knowledge from no less authority than Charles Garvey late of Glade House. During the latter years of the last century when the track was under construction one man, taking shelter during blasting operations, lay down behind this rock, put his head under and proceeded to light his pipe. In the light of his match he saw to his amazement that the rock was a mere shell and investigating further, found while on his feet this great bell-shaped cavity reached far above his head.

One of the most interesting features seen on the way down to Sandfly Point is Lake Ada. When its waters are low it is seen studded with tree stumps like pins in a pin-cushion. A survey conducted by Victoria University personnel has shown that the lake was formed almost a thousand years ago when major earth movements, caused almost certainly by earthquake, dammed the river and drowned the forest. Lake Ada is gradually shrinking in size and depth. The extensive sandbanks at the head of the lake keep steadily advancing, reaching out to join Giant's Gate delta. Soundings



MacKinnon Pass showing sheer drop into Arthur Valley on left and zigzag track emerging from the Clinton Valley on right.



Previous A-frame hut blown down October 1968. New hut in background, Nicholas Peaks in distance.

taken in the survey recorded no greater depth than 50 feet, while 80 years ago 70 feet was recorded.

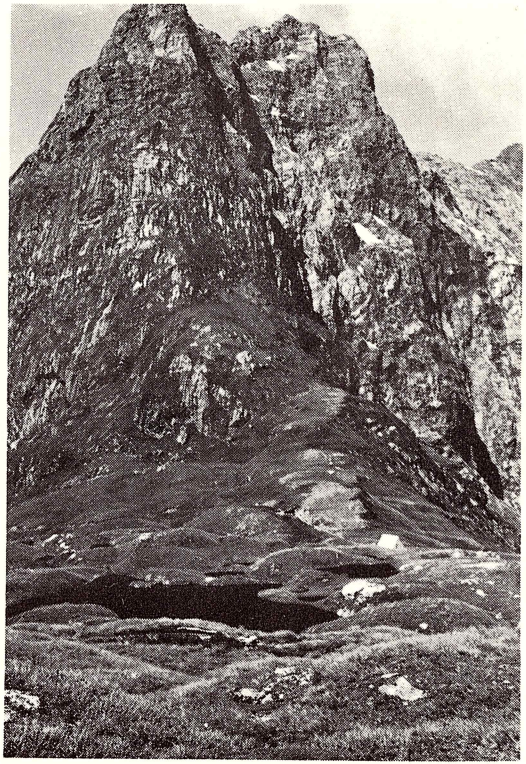
Between Boatshed and Lake Ada the mountain across the river is the same one seen from the Clinton. Wick Mountain was named by Donald Sutherland, from Wick in Scotland, his birthplace. Between the mountains Wick and Sheerdown, Joes' River enters Lake Ada. Early attempts were made by Donald Sutherland and John Mackay to find a pass leading to the interior via this valley.

At this stage all members of the party will have an eye on the timepiece so as not to keep the launch waiting at Sandfly. So we will take our leave with the hopes that you catch the launch, have a good time at Milford and in the fullness of time reach home safely.

Four year old Joy Caldwell. Ready to set out for the MacKinnon Pass with her brothers Robert and Ian.

Photo: Mrs Rawson

Beech Forest in the Clinton Canyon
Photo Zygmunt Kepka



Pass Hut in middle distance Mt Balloon and Lake Taipo.
Photo Zygmunt Kepka

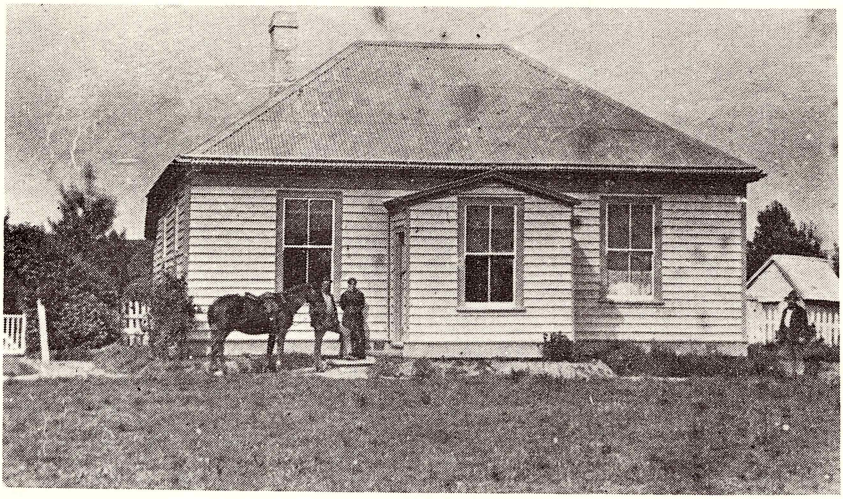
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A hundred years ago the Arthur and Clinton Valleys were terra incognito to the new New Zealander. The Maoris told Captain Howell, Master of the Whaling Station at Riverton, that there was a route through to the coast via the headwaters of the Waiau River. Why this clue was not followed up earlier by explorers, is hard to understand. The first white men to reach Te Anau were ~~Mantell~~ NAIRN and Stephens in 1852. The earliest visitor to the Clinton River we have record of was James McKerrow in 1862. The next was Samuel Moreton and W.Y.H. Hall in 1867 when they rowed two miles up the river. They went ashore but did not venture further. Quintin MacKinnon and others followed but none penetrated very far.

In 1872 Te Anau was only a dot on the map. The lordly gum trees we now admire would not be long planted by Mr Hankinson. Visitors had many miles to travel over roadless country, and could do very little without the co-operation of the run-holders who would have enough on their hands keeping the connections open with civilisation, without making any in the other direction.

At the other end Milford, although more easily accessible by water than Te Anau by land, had yet to attract a permanent white resident. The Sound was surveyed in 1853 by John Lort Stokes. The Cleddau Valley was explored by Dr Hector in 63. He named as Lake Abraham the one we know as Lake Ada but he left no record of visiting it. In 1872 a party of Maoris from Colac Bay on a sealing expedition sailed into the Arthur River and being explorer minded decided to make their way up to Lake Abraham. They thought they had the valley to themselves until they came across a naked foot-print in the mud at the river's edge. They found fire-places and sleeping quarters but of their fellow countrymen, not a sign.

Nibbles at either end of the unborn track at that time gave no desire for larger samplings and those solitudes were not further disturbed until the advent of Donald Sutherland, five years later.



Mitchell's Manapouri Station homestead from which Ernest Mitchell and Quintin MacKinnon commenced their adventurous exploits on September 2, 1888, that culminated in the discovery of the MacKinnon Pass.

Photo C. Mitchell

Between the burning of the old and the erection of the new Glade House tourists lunched in the open.

Photo David Calder

RECENT HISTORY

In taking up the pen again after launching "Milford Trails", we have a gap of some three years to fill. Compared with the preceding three years the latter have been much less eventful, the track settling down to a stabilised pattern, after considerable reorganisation.

Final retirement of the horses on the 20th May, 1970, after their 64 year reign, closed an era made colourful for the vital and varied service they rendered.

Air service to Quintin and road service to Pompolona appears upon the whole, to work out satisfactorily.

In the difficult period of transition the main burden was carried by Zygmunt Kepka at Quintin, Richard Tubman at Pompolona and Phil Turnbull, first at Quintin, then at Glade House. Without dedicated men such as these a different tale would have to be told. In their particular sphere Betty Turnbull and Marlene Rostov contributed in no less measure to the task in hand.

In her many years spent at Pompolona as manageress and chef, Marlene has established a very fine record. It is with regret we learn that she is not returning this season. We hear that Richard Tubman also, is not returning. Like his predecessors at Pompolona of late years, Ray O'Brien, Ray Willet and the late Dan Greany, he has left his mark that will not be erased.

Peter Salter and Kathryn Whiteley, who were on the Quintin staff last season, will take over Pompolona as newly weds. With our congratulations we wish them a happy and successful season in their new sphere.

Phil and Betty Turnbull will again be in command at Glade House and an Auckland couple, Mr and Mrs Wright at Quintin.

Chief among the V.I.P.'s to walk the track in recent times was the Vice Regal Party which made the visit in December 1971. Lady Porritt was escorted by some seven companions. Apart from a little rain their first day, they encountered good weather and declared

Ready to set off from Quintin to Boatshed for stores. Boss, Cob and Blaze.

Photo: Mrs Rawson

Sandfly Point: Tractor arrives to take over from the horses 1959.

Photo: Dorothy Caldwell

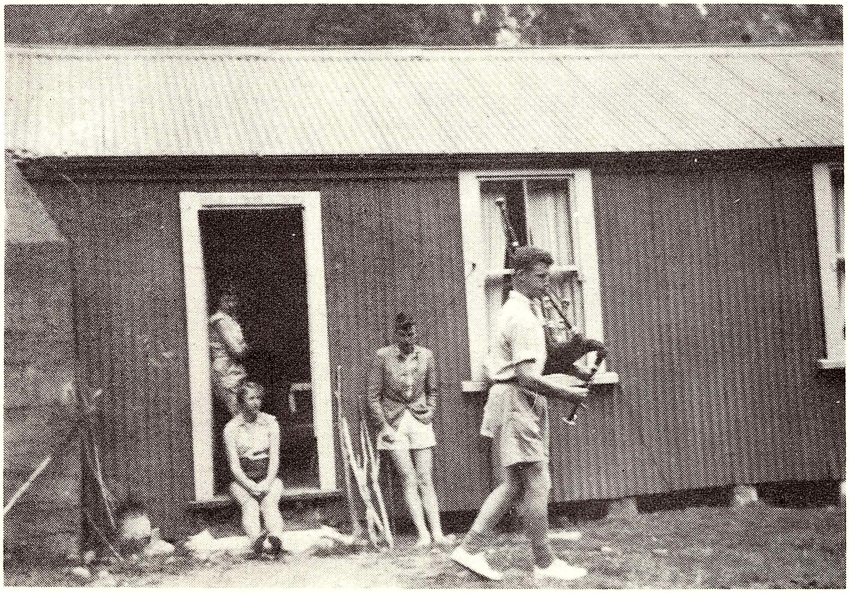
they had thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

Notable among improvements made in recent years is the bridge over the Arthur River, a little way below the Boatshed. Ferrying across the river at Boatshed, although saving the quarter mile walk via the bridge, gave no advantage in time and was on occasion fraught with some hazard. The bridge eliminates the weakest link in the chain between Lake Te Anau and Milford Sound.

Replacement of the Giant's Gate Bridge also supplants the temporary ferry that did service, pending the rebuilding.

The hut replacing Crows' Nest will in all probability be erected before the tramping season commences.

One innovation not so popular is the contraction of the tramping season to a brief fifteen weeks. Were it not for economic considerations, the season could very well extend from mid-November to mid-April.



David Williamson. Probably the first tramper to walk the track in kilts blaws a stirring tune outside the walls of Quintin.

Photo: Mrs Rawson

COMING EVENTS

With the first party at the opening of the season, we shall look forward to seeing a bid made to set a record for the oldest walker to traverse the Milford Track. The aspirant is Mr Ted Crothall of Auckland, who walked the Track in 1969. The present record holder is the famous veteran Mr A.H. Reed, who was then six months younger than Mr Crothall will be when he performs his war dance before challenging the title-holder.

It is unfortunate that the Tourist Hotel Corporation has placed a ban on under ten year olds, otherwise we could have the added attraction of a "youngest" contest. The crown, as far as we are aware goes to a four year old, daughter of the Cheritons of Glade House, earned some forty years ago. A granddaughter of mine, when she was four, walked from the Milford end of the track to the monument on the Pass and back. This was more than equivalent to going straight through, but she was four months older than little Miss Cheriton. Miss Cheriton went over the Pass on a very wet day, with never a pause and never a murmur.

As far as family parties go Jack Skinner set a record, by making a full track party of children and grandchildren, but on the 8th Jan. in the new year, we shall be pleased to give an encouraging word to a family party, (McRobie) of Auckland, consisting of father, mother and five sons. Their mother as M.B. (Betty) Paton was on the Quintin staff in 1955. Two waterfalls on Moraine Creek, the Margaret and Kenneth, bear the parents' names respectively.

CORRECTIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO MILFORD TRAILS

The hardest thing in the world to do, it would seem, is to publish a book containing no errors. Milford Trails is no exception.

In the fourth paragraph on the dust cover "Quinn" should read "Quill".

Page 10 - In the map, Clinton Forks Hut should be on the other side of the track.

Page 18 - Jock Peterson was packing at Glade House that season. The name of the packer at Quintin cannot be recalled.

Page 24 - Lake Stephen should be exchanged with Lake Ella and Stephen shown larger. Lake Ella should be shown slightly beyond the Pass Hut which should appear on the other side of the track.

Pages 28-29 - Milford Trails does not do Donald Sutherland justice. Far from finding the world too tough, he had no thought of capitulating and tamely returning home. An acquaintance of the family chanced to see him in Edinburgh and notified his father, who promptly arrived on the scene and took him home.

Page 28 - Third paragraph, "earlier" should read early.

Page 63 - The eldest Garvey son of Glade House states that the first two huts built at Quintin in 1897 were provided by the Government for general track use and not by the Union Steamship Company for the excursionists.

Page 64 - Illustration of Lower Landing, 1901 should be 1910.

Page 65 - The statement that the hull of the Tawera was built in Dunedin repeats a commonly held belief. "Old Hand" in a letter to the Southland Times wrote, quote - "The steamer was built in Scotland and ran a passenger service for some years on a lake. It was dismantled and shipped to Port Chalmers where it was reassembled and it ran for some years on the Otago Harbour." Old Hand did not enlighten on the source of his information but he seemed to be sure of his facts.

Page 70 - The Tawera was converted to a motor vessel in 1927.

Page 71 - The first Pass Hut was not built by Ivan Latham, but as Ministry of Works carpenter, he prefabricated it in Invercargill.

Page 73 - Paragraph four, Huber should read Hulse.

Page 138 - The river crossing should be shown immediately above Glade House.

Page 161 - Illustration of Mt Wilmot should read Mt Wilmur.

The first boat on Lake Ada, a 17 foot canoe was fashioned from a big beech tree by Donald Sutherland. By this means he was enabled to explore the valley beyond the lake and, in due course, in the company of John Mackay, discovered the Sutherland Falls.
Photo: Burton Bros. Collection, Dominion Museum

HOW IT HAPPENED

An interesting exercise all of us indulge in at times is to trace back the course of our thoughts, our conversations or actions, to find just how we arrived at some particular situation.

Harking back over the long trail that reached to the Milford Track Annual, when I woke this morning, Tuesday, November 7, 1972, I found the trail a very, very long one. However, here and there appeared some prominent motivating impulses so I shall make one of them my starting point.

I think it was during the 56-57 season I was at Quintin I received a newspaper clipping by post, the title of the article it contained being "The Finest Walk in the World".

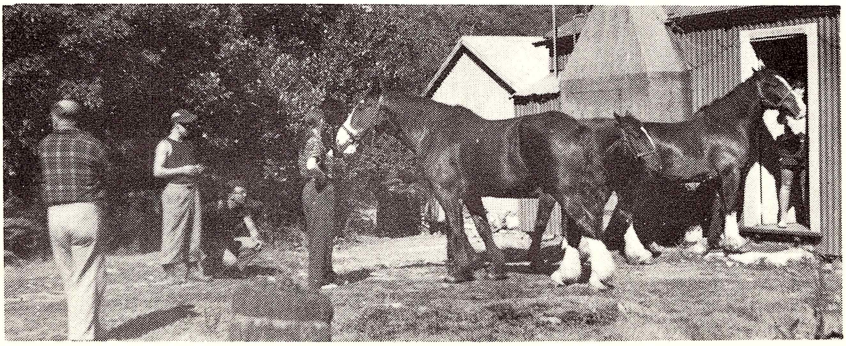
By this time the idea that a scrap-book would be helpful to those keen trampers wanting to know something of the past as well as the present, was taking firm root. While realising what ought to be done, it seemed just too easy to postpone the actual commencement of the project.

This clipping seemed to me just the very one with which to commence the book so, when I reached home at the end of the season I bought a scrap-book and in went the first item. Once started, the book soon filled and even its first season at Quintin, with its comparatively meagre contents proved its worth.

For a time I just made use of material which happened to come my way, without troubling to search far afield. However, I was becoming more and more interested in seeking answers to the questions that arose from my lack of knowledge of the past and was led to dig deeper for the facts. The gathering of material accelerated when readers, with access to further information, made it available to me. This snow-balling process still continues and it would seem that the spring of Track history will never run dry.

My first scrap-book, with constant use, finished up in tatters. Some trampers, after "lights out" would take the book to bed with them and in the light of a candle complete the reading from cover

Quintin, Mt. Balloon, MacKinnon Pass, from First Lookout Anderson Track.
Photo Zygmunt Kepka



An idle day for man and beast at Quintin,
Photo: Mrs Rawson

to cover. Mr Alexander, Hotel Milford manager, on a visit to Quintin, seeing the book and its condition promised me a new one. He was as good as his word and that one, now weighty with its contents and somewhat the worse for wear is still on the active list. I transferred what I could salvage from the old to the new, including that original clipping.

On one of his trips through the track Mr Colbeck, manager for the Tourist Hotel Corporation, like Mr Alexander, thought my effort worth encouraging with the result Mr Honey was commissioned to supply me with two beautiful books. I filled the old book with items as I received them, all higgledy-piggledy, but the new books have them entered in something like chronological order.

There had never been a comprehensive history written of the Milford Track and I tried to interest various people in the project. I would have been happy to give them what I had accumulated to assist to that end but none accepted the offer. Everyone said "Write it yourself" and in the end that is just what I did. If I had in the first place intended to write a book I would have kept a diary. This would have made the job ten times easier.

When I was approached by the publisher's representative to see if I would write a book I felt as I suppose others have done, that I still had incomplete knowledge of the subject.

This feeling no doubt deters many a budding author from making a valuable contribution to knowledge in his particular sphere of interest. To await full knowledge would mean that no book would ever be written. Already I have found amendments necessary to Milford Trails. The sense of incompleteness in recording the past and awareness of the continual unfolding of further history day by day and year by year made the Annual a logical creation.

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